

From: Martin Gelfand
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/23/02 12:58pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

I am grateful for this chance to express my opinion concerning the Proposed Final Judgement in US vs Microsoft.

Let me put it plainly: I believe the proposed remedies are entirely inadequate, and need to be thoroughly reconsidered in order to effectively prevent Microsoft from using anticompetitive tactics to retard the development and application of Open Source software.

An lengthy discussion of the PFJ from this point of view has already been provided to your office by Dan Kegel, and is available on the WWW at <http://www.kegel.com/remedy/remedy2.html> . Let me focus on just one item.

At work (I am an Associate Professor at Physics, at Colorado State University) and home I run GNU/Linux operating systems on my computers. A real annoyance I have to deal with on a regular basis is being sent or referred to Word, Excel, and Powerpoint files, which in many cases cannot be nicely interpreted using the software available on my computers. Much of the monopoly power associated with Microsoft lies not in its control of operating systems but in its control of the Office suite. The undocumented file formats associated with Office are a major Applications Barrier to Entry (as discussed in the Findings of Fact) and, in the absence of any guaranteed way to run Microsoft Office natively on a GNU/Linux system (WINE may work at some point in time, but there is nothing in the PFJ to stop Microsoft from working against WINE's success by various technical and legal means) there are considerable barriers to introduce GNU/Linux systems into office environments which have chosen to standardize on Microsoft's Office suite. Requiring Microsoft to fully document the file formats associated with Office, which will allow Open Source office suite developers to more readily generate effective input/output filters for Microsoft document formats, ought to be part of any remedy for its illegal anticompetitive practices.

Sincerely,
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